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ABSTRACT

A study that examined consonance among the three major television networks' evening news programs for the period 1973 through 1981 used multiple criteria to assess long-term patterns of network similarity in news selection and treatment. A random sample was drawn, using one constructed week of five weekdays per quarter of the nine years and yielding twenty broadcast dates per year, or a total of 180 dates. The newscasts were coded for several variables, including length in seconds, focus, and topic. Agreement was high in between-network comparison: correlation of annual topic agendas, distribution of items or coverage among different geopolitical regions, correlation of topic agendas for items receiving additional network emphasis, contrasts of annual mean length of items, and correlation of topic agendas of "lead" items. Only in percentages of items distributed devoted to the different categories were there major differences among the networks. Results indicated that there are significant similarities between the evening newscasts of the three major networks. Several tables conclude the document. (DF)

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Rivals in Consonance: The Case of Television Network News

by

Daniel Riffe
The University of Alabama

Brenda Ellis
Southeast Missouri State University

Momo K. Rogers
Delaware State University

Roger L. Van Ommeren
South Dakota State University

Kieran A. Woodman
Galway College, Ireland

Presented to the Radio-Television Journalism Division at the Annual Convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Memphis, TN, August 1985.

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Daniel Riffe

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RIVALS IN CONSONANCE:
THE CASE OF TELEVISION NETWORK NEWS

Daniel Riffe
Department of Journalism
University of Alabama
University, AL

Brenda Ellis, Momo Rogers,
Roger Van Ommeren, Kieran Woodman

Abstract

This paper reports a content analysis study of consonance--or patterns of content similarity--among network television (ABC, CBS, NBC) weeknightly newscasts for the period 1973-1981 inclusive. Justification for the study hinges, on the one hand, upon the consensus-building function of highly consonant media channels and, on the other hand, the "pervasive, constructed--distorted?-reality" consequence of a lack of diversity in content.

A representative random sample of 20 broadcast dates per each of nine years was used in collecting data from the Vanderbilt Television News Index and Abstracts. Coding agreement ranged from 77% to 95% for several variables: length of item, focus of item (where), and topic.

Agreement was high, and significant, in virtually all between-network comparisons or tests for consonance: correlation of annual topic agendas; distribution of items or coverage among different geopolitical regions; correlation of topic agendas for the different regions; correlation of topic agendas for items receiving additional network emphasis (i.e., running over one minute of airtime); contrasts of annual mean length of items; and correlation of topic agendas of "lead" items. Only in percentages of items distributed among several arbitrary ordinal length categories were there major differences among the networks.

Whether one draws conclusions of positive or negative consequences of content pattern similarity, these data indicate that the network newscasts are virtual mirror-images in terms of the kinds of news which are covered.

Paper presented to the Radio-Television Journalism Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication convention, Memphis State University, August 1985.

RIVALS IN CONSONANCE:
THE CASE OF TELEVISION NETWORK NEWS

While local television stations publicize their affiliation with distinctive network news organizations, and the networks promote the uniqueness of their nightly news programs, systematic examination suggests that the networks speak with the same--a consonant--voice.

This paper represents a preliminary report on a study examining the extent of consonance among three "rivals in conformity,"[1] network television's evening news programs, for the period 1973-1981.

On the one hand, considerable content duplication is to be expected. "After all, the networks presumably are covering the same world," Lemert wrote in 1974.[2] Indeed, to some extent duplication is functional: standardization of content makes possible the focusing of a pluralistic public's attention and, ultimately, consensus.[3] As Shaw has argued, one of the facilitating mechanisms of agenda-setting is consonance, whereby specific issues are repeatedly emphasized across different media and media channels.[4]

On the other hand, consonance is problematic in a society which values diverse views; according to Altheide, sameness among television network news programs "amounts to a national news service."[5] And of course many of the dysfunctions attributed to television's presentation of a view of the world implicitly presuppose repetitive patterns of content.[6]

Studies revealing the extent of media consonance have varied in focus and design. Lemert, in examining 14 days' evening

network newscasts, discovered 57.7% duplication of stories among the networks (perhaps even more telling was the pattern of similar emphasis or placement of items).[7]

Hester, studying five years of foreign news coverage, discovered cross-network similarity of conflict emphasis and amount of airtime--about 5 1/2 minutes--devoted to foreign news[8] Extending Hester's study to a 10-year period, Weaver et al., also found sameness among networks.[9]

Consonance has also been shown in network coverage of specific types of news or events. For example, Meeske and Javaheri found no major network differences in percentages of reports, inferences and judgments presented in coverage of the Iranian hostage crisis.[10] Altheide's analysis of coverage of the same event discovered consonance in number of network reports, minutes of coverage, topic and emphasis.[11] Capo measured 74.6% duplication of 1972 network Watergate coverage, and 84.3% of 1973 coverage.[12] Dominick tallied 59% duplication of business news items,[13] while Mishra found roughly 40% of each network's broadcasts contained two or more law enforcement items (network duplication of individual items was not traced).[14]

In other ways, of course, the networks differ in news coverage. For example, Lindlof and Canning, analyzing network coverage of the broadcasting industry, discovered between-network differences in types and length, but not number, of reports.[15] Roberts found network differences in treatment of blacks.[16]

While these studies explored similarity in television news content, examination of newspaper content has shown consonance in coverage of political contests[17] and government activity,[18] and

in foreign news.[19]

Factors contributing to consonance include common socialization of newspeople in and out of the newsroom,[20] common definitions of news,[21] reliance on the same suppliers of news copy,[22] and on the same legitimated news sources.[23] Like print news media, television news has formalized and routinized many news-gathering procedures--and organizational structures--that contribute to content sameness. As Altheide has concluded, "The essentially homogeneous content of network newscasts has emerged from the similarities accompanying the institutionalization of television news."[24]

This study uses multiple criteria to assess long-term patterns of network similarity in news selection and treatment (i.e., topics, airtime, and geopolitical focus of items). The specific research objective in the study is to measure consonance and identify its correlates within a longitudinal period of analysis. The study adds to the literature by building upon Lemert's[25] examination of 14 days of all types of news (foreign and domestic), although it owes its longitudinal design emphasis to the Hester and Weaver et al. studies of foreign news.[26]

The study samples extensively within the period 1973-1981 inclusive, because long-term coverage patterns were sought; because those years encompassed a period of increasing competitiveness among the three networks' news operations;[27] and because that period encompassed a variety of types of spot and, perhaps more importantly, ongoing or "trend"news events (the winding down of the Vietnam conflict; Watergate; the oil embargo and subse-

quent conservation and legislative responses; the mid-70s focus on human rights culminating in the Helsinki accord; and the revolution in Iran that resulted in the kidnapping of embassy personnel). Consonance in treating a single event (e.g., all three networks give lead position to the same spot news event), after all, evidences only the reliability of news judgments in a single situation.

Method

A random sample was drawn using one constructed week[28] of five weekdays (Mondays through Friday only, for cross-network comparability) per quarter (January through March, April through June, etc.) of the nine years, yielding 20 broadcast dates per year, or a total sample of 180 dates.

The researchers were able to utilize the Vanderbilt Television News Archives' Television News Index and Abstracts, rather than the actual newscasts, due to the nature of the research question and the variables to be measured.

For each sample date, all abstracted items from each of the three networks' (ABC, CBS, NBC) newscasts were coded for several variables, including: length in seconds, focus (location in which event occurred) and topic. Average agreement among five coders ranged from 77% (topic) to 95% (focus).[29]

Findings and Discussion

Table One indicates how each network's annual total of news items was distributed among 10 topic categories developed for an earlier study of print media consonance.[30] Although most categories are self-explanatory, it is worth noting the distinction between "Internal" (used to refer to matters domestic, regardless

of the country of origin of an item) and "International" (used to refer to matters between nations, regardless of the country of origin of an item).

Presentation of the data in percentage form permits between-network comparisons, and controls for a trend--at least for CBS and NBC--toward fewer newscast items each year. (When ranks are assigned each year based on the number of sampled items, and compared with ranks assigned the nine years in the study (i.e., 1973 was ranked first, 1974 ranked second, etc.), a significant value of Spearman's rank-order correlation for CBS and NBC (rho=.72 in both cases) indicates a trend toward fewer items (rho for ABC was .48, not significant at .05).)[31]

But, while the fluctuations in percentages of items devoted to each topic are themselves interesting (particularly the almost-cyclic juxtaposition of nations' internal political and economic news, the "ups and downs" of international conflict and international relations items, and the seeming stability of the "Bad News" category), the primary measure of consonance comes in the between-network rank-order correlations. Spearman's rho was calculated for each network pair in a given year, with ranks based on the comparative prominence of each of the topic categories (the topic category with the most items was ranked first, etc.).

In every case, the similarity of these network "topic agendas" is significant. Even though the ranking alternately minimizes and maximizes large and small percentage differences respectively (and even though the "crudeness" of a set of categories

can arguably inflate a measure of rank correlation), the sheer magnitude of the values of rho (from .76 to .98) is nonetheless remarkable. In terms of the general patterns of news emphasis, the data clearly indicate consonance.

Comparisons of topic agendas, however, represent only one means of assessing consonance, albeit an approach which has garnered some theoretical support.[32] Further, these topic agendas ignore the locational focus of news items, and thus fail to distinguish between qualitatively different news of social problems in the United States and in the Soviet Union, between domestic economic news and news of economic developments in poor Third World countries, between the "Bad News" of a ghetto fire in Detroit and the "Bad News" of the plight of Vietnamese boat people. Does the pattern of network similarity hold in coverage of different areas of the world? Some research on print media has shown a clear tendency for the degree of consonance to be related to geopolitical focus.[33]

As a preliminary to between-network comparisons of topic agendas for items from different geopolitical regions, Table Two indicates the extent to which the networks do not differ in their overall treatment of domestic, First World (Western industrialized nations and Japan), Second World (socialist and communist nations) and Third World (the emerging and developing nations) news.[34]

Not surprisingly, the networks' news is predominantly domestic in focus, with the percentage ranging from 61% to 82%. Values of chi-square fail to indicate any significant association between network and treatment of region. Again, the data suggest

between-network consonance, although at what is admittedly a gross level of analysis.

When the networks' topic agendas for the specific geopolitical regions are compared, the degree of consonance appears, again, to be somewhat related to region, although the overall pattern is again toward overwhelming agreement, as shown in Table Three (only coefficients reflecting extent of agreement between topic agendas is shown, not the percentages themselves). Only in comparing First World items do any (6 of a possible 27) of the values of rho fall below the .05 critical value. (Interestingly, it is diversity in ABC's First World topic agenda which leads to the disagreement; in all cases CBS and NBC maintain their significant similarity.) Even the less reliable Second World coefficients point to significant between-network agreement.

That the presence of these six non-significant coefficients indexes a relationship of focus and degree of consonance is, of course, arguable. Perhaps more suggestive is the crude ordering afforded by averaging the values of rho for each region, yielding mean measures of: .91 for domestic news; .88 for Third World news; .815 for Second World news; and .61 for First World news. But while an ordering of the regions is possible, the "average" rho of even the lowest ordered region--the First World--falls above the critical significance value.

Table Four introduces yet another way of assessing the existence, and degree, of consonance: in terms of how the minutes--the newshole, if you will--of the nightly newscast are used. In Table Four, items are grouped on the basis of several

length (in seconds) categories: 1-10 seconds (the second-most common length in the sample, accounting for 13% of all items); 11-20 seconds (the latter was the modal length, accounting for 20% of all items); 21-60 seconds (the third-most common length, accounting for 11% of all items); and over 60 seconds (approximately 50% of the items were above this median length, with the maximum length recorded 860 seconds).

The data (and 7 of 9 significant values of chi-square) demonstrate that, in general, there were patterns of between-network difference in proportion of items devoted to the different categories. In 1973, 1974 and 1977, CBS used comparatively fewer of the 1-10 second items and a correspondingly greater percentage of items in the 11-60 second range. In 1978, ABC's coverage included more short items (1-10 seconds), and a reduced percentage of 21-60 second items. The network would continue that approach through 1981, reaching the point, in 1979, when 42% of its total items were 20 seconds or shorter. By contrast, in 1979 34% of CBS' and 28% of NBC's items were under 21 seconds. Concomitant with ABC's seeming move toward shorter items was a trend in NBC coverage toward a larger percentage of longer items, so that by 1981, 6 of 10 NBC items were over a minute long.

Table Five presents coefficients (rho) indicating extent of similarity between network topic agendas for only those items given above-median (over one minute) airtime. Again, the overwhelming pattern is one of consonance; the networks are remarkably--and significantly--alike in the percentages of the varied topics which they choose to afford greater emphasis (or which are

judged to merit greater emphasis).

The length-of-item variable receives final treatment in Table Six, in which annual mean length of items is contrasted across networks. As before, the data paint a profile of similarity. Only in 1981 is there a significant between-networks difference in mean item length. (There are some within-network differences from year to year. These will be discussed in another report.)

In Table Seven, data are offered which again permit an exploration of consonance in how the networks cover the news. The percentages represent the proportion of lead item-stories devoted to each topic. Because the number of sample dates per year was only 20, annual topic agendas for lead item-stories were judged to be unreliable (based on an n of approximately 20 per year). Table Seven topic agendas aggregate items from all nine years of newscasts. For all three networks, the n is greater than 180--i.e., one lead per each of 20 sample newscasts multiplied by nine years--because coders assigned "lead" status on the basis of the news topic, even though the counting unit for the study was the individual report. That is, multiple reports/items occasionally treated the same "lead" topic. Each item was coded.

Given the pattern of topic agenda similarity detailed repeatedly above, the similarity evidenced in Table Seven is unsurprising. Even the near-perfect ABC-CBS correlation is not unexpected.

Conclusions

Of course, many would argue that, measures of overwhelming consonance in topic emphasis and dominance, airtime, and geopolitical focus notwithstanding, there are nonetheless differences among the network news programs. How else explain the primacy of one in the ratings game, or how else justify the salaries paid the superstar anchors of the network newscasts? From the viewer's perspective, there are marked differences among networks in terms of believability of news organizations and personnel.

Yet when one considers the view of the world the networks provide (a rather small world if the networks' heavily domestic orientation is weighed) and the kind of events that populate that world, the evidence of similarity easily diminishes superficial differences such as gender, appearance or credibility of newsreader.

But "the news" is not just topics and events, it is comparative importance or differential emphasis. When treatment variables--length and placement--are considered, however, the inescapable conclusion is, again, that it makes little difference which network newscast one watches. The major treatment difference, in fact, involves the networks' varied proportions of items in the 1-10, 11-20, and 21-60 second categories. This difference is arguably a measurement artifact, if the lack of differences shown in the (analysis of variance) contrast of mean length is also considered.

Indeed, the consistency of the consonance finding across partial analyses itself suggests methodological artifact-"ism,"

that topic categories are so crude as to disguise great diversity in network news content. Imprecise as these categories may be, however, we are reluctant to accept this interpretation, given what we know of media reference indices, "pack journalism," reliance on common sources, etc.

Instead, we may take Altheide's functional perspective and agree that the consequence of network news consonance is, in effect, a national news service, supplying the same news to everyone.

Or we could view consonance as an acknowledgment of reliability among journalists. Reporters and editors at all three networks apply the same news judgment principles and arrive at the same conclusions about what is important and how it should be treated. Those emphases on certain kinds of events are presumably passed on to viewers, through long-term repetition.

The latter interpretation reminds us of Lemert's 1974 disclaimer that, "After all, the networks presumably are covering the same world." That may be. Some argue, however, that in a sense media can never truly mirror reality--through selective inclusion and emphasis they distort and re-formulate reality.

The fidelity of that re-formulated, cumulative vision to reality remains problematic. But to amend Lemert slightly, we conclude that, "The networks are collectively creating the same world."

Notes

[1] Stanley K. Bigman, "Rivals in Conformity: A Study of Two Competing Dailies," Journalism Quarterly, 25:127-31 (1948).

[2] James B. Lemert, "Content Duplication by the Networks in Competing Evening Newscasts," Journalism Quarterly, 51:238-44 (1974).

[3] For a discussion of media consonance and public opinion, see: Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann, "Return to the Concept of Powerful Mass Media," Studies of Broadcasting, 9:67-112 (1973).

[4] Eugene F. Shaw, "Agenda-setting and Mass Communication Theory," Gazette, 25:96-105 (1979).

[5] David L. Altheide, "Three-in-One News: Network Coverage of Iran," Journalism Quarterly, 59:482-86 (1982).

[6] The theoretical framework underlying this approach to effects is explored in: Hanna Adoni and Sherrill Mane, "Media and the Social Construction of Reality: Toward an Integration of Theory and Research," Communication Research, 11:323-40 (1984).

[7] Lemert, op. cit.

[8] Al Hester, "Five Years of Foreign News in U.S. Television Evening Newscasts," Gazette, 24:88-95 (1978).

[9] James B. Weaver, Christopher J. Porter and Margaret E. Evans, "Patterns of Foreign News Coverage on U.S. Network TV: A 10-Year Analysis," Journalism Quarterly, 61:356-363 (1984).

[10] Milan D. Meeske and Mohamed H. Javaheri, "Network Television Coverage of the Iranian Hostage Crisis," Journalism Quarterly, 59:641-645 (1982).

[11] Altheide, op. cit.

[12] James A. Capo, "Network Watergate Coverage Patterns in Late 1972 and Early 1973," Journalism Quarterly, 60:595-602 (1983).

[13] Joseph R. Dominick, "Business Coverage in Network Newscasts," Journalism Quarterly, 58:179-85, 191 (1981).

[14] V. M. Mishra, "How Commercial Television Networks Cover News of Law Enforcement," Journalism Quarterly, 56:611-16, 631 (1979).

[15] Thomas R. Lindlof and William R. Canning, "Network News Coverage of the Broadcast Media," Journalism Quarterly, 57:333-38 (1980).

[16] Churchill Roberts, "The Presentation of Blacks in Television Network Newscasts," Journalism Quarterly, 52:50-55 (1975).

[17] Doris A. Graber, "Press Coverage Patterns of Campaign News: The 1968 Presidential Race," Journalism Quarterly, 48:502-512 (1971); Guido H. Stempel III and John W. Windhauser, "The Prestige Press Revisited: Coverage of the 1980 Presidential Campaign," Journalism Quarterly, 61:49-55 (1984).

[18] Thomas R. Donohue and Theodore L. Glasser, "Homogeneity in Coverage of Connecticut Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly, 55:592-96 (1978).

[19] Daniel Riffe and Eugene F. Shaw, "Conflict and Consonance: Coverage of Third World in Two U.S. Papers," Journalism Quarterly, 59:617-26 (1982). But see, for a contrast, Norman R. Luttberg, "News Consensus: Do US Newspapers Mirror Society's Happenings," Journalism Quarterly, 60:484-88, 578 (1983).

[20] L. Erwin Atwood and Gerald Grotta, "Socialization of News Values in Beginning Reporters," Journalism Quarterly, 47:296-302 (1970); and Warren Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom," Social Forces, 33:326-335 (1955).

[21] See, for example: James K. Buckalew, "News Elements and Selection by Television News Editors," Journal of Broadcasting, 14:47-54 (1969); Robert W. Clyde and James K. Buckalew, "Intermedia Standardization: A Q-Analysis of News Editors," Journalism Quarterly, 46:349-351 (1969); and Al Hester, "The News from Latin America via a World News Agency," Gazette, 20:82-97 (1974).

[22] See, for example: B. H. Liebes, "Decision Making by Telegraph Editors--AP or UPI?" Journalism Quarterly, 43:434-42 (1966).

[23] See Gaye Tuchman, Making News (New York: The Free Press, 1978).

[24] Altheide, op. cit.

[25] Lemert, op. cit.

[26] Hester, op. cit. and Weaver et al., op. cit.

[27] Some suggest that the mid- to late-70s surge in network competition was not motivated by a desire for prestige or to better serve viewers, but as a profit-seeking response to Justice Department efforts to reduce network monopolies by limiting the amount of programming the networks can produce themselves. See Samuel L. Becker's Discovering Mass Communication (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1983), p. 316.

[28] Robert Jones and Roy Carter Jr., "Some Procedures for Estimating 'Newshole' in Content Analysis," Public Opinion Quarterly, 23:399-403 (1959).

[29] Calculated with formula of Ole R. Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities (reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969); pp. 137-140.

[30] Riffe and Shaw, op. cit.

[31] See Gerhard Tintner, Econometrics (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1952), pp. 211-215.

[32] See: Paul M. Hirsch, "Occupational, Organizational, and Institutional Models in Mass Media Research: Toward an Integrated Framework," in Paul M. Hirsch, Peter V. Miller and F. Gerald Kline (eds.), Strategies for Communication Research (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977), pp. 13-42; and D. Charles Whitney, "Mass Communicator Studies: Similarity, Difference, and Level of Analysis," in James S. Ettema and D. Charles Whitney (eds.) Individuals in Mass Media Organizations: Creativity and Constraint (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982), pp. 241-254.

[33] Riffe and Shaw, op. cit.

[34] The conventional World Bank classification scheme is employed here.

Table One

Topic Percentages, by Network and By Year

Topic:	1973 ABC %	1973 CBS %	1973 NBC %	1974 ABC %	1974 CBS %	1974 NBC %	1975 ABC %	1975 CBS %	1975 NBC %
Internal Politics	26.8	32.4	28.7	37.3	41.3	39.3	25.7	26.6	29.3
Internal Conflict	3.7	2.0	1.2	2.4	3.2	2.8	3.3	6.3	3.7
Internal Economic	21.5	22.7	22.5	20.5	19.8	18.4	22.7	19.6	17.0
Social Policies	3.4	1.5	.9	2.2	2.2	2.4	3.9	2.4	5.1
Science, Technology, Art	3.4	4.7	6.7	2.4	1.0	1.6	4.3	5.1	3.1
International Relations	12.5	9.6	10.8	7.1	5.2	6.7	9.5	8.8	10.5
International Conflict	6.9	6.1	8.8	5.8	4.8	7.7	7.6	10.0	7.8
International Economic	.3	.3	3.5	1.7	3.2	2.2	2.0	1.2	4.8
Miscellaneous "Bad News"	15.0	15.2	10.5	12.1	12.1	12.1	15.5	14.8	14.3
Sports and Human Interest	6.5	5.5	6.4	8.4	7.3	6.9	5.6	5.1	4.4
n=	321	343	342	464	504	506	304	331	294
Between-network rank-order correlations[a]:									
(ABC-CBS) (CBS-NBC)		.98	.94		.92	.96		.91	.78
(ABC-NBC)			.88			.90			.84

Topic:	1976 ABC %	1976 CBS %	1976 NBC %	1977 ABC %	1977 CBS %	1977 NBC %	1978 ABC %	1978 CBS %	1978 NBC %
Internal Politics	38.2	41.8	40.9	26.3	34.2	32.0	18.2	18.3	13.8
Internal Conflict	7.2	8.6	6.6	7.0	5.6	5.5	3.6	4.1	3.3
Internal Economic	12.4	11.7	9.0	14.8	15.4	11.3	22.8	18.7	21.1
Social Policies	2.8	2.3	1.8	4.4	5.6	8.0	6.3	7.6	7.1
Science, Technology, Art	3.4	3.6	4.8	5.5	3.4	5.5	9.4	10.9	9.8
International Relations	5.4	5.5	9.0	17.8	13.2	16.4	11.9	14.0	10.0
International Conflict	8.5	8.3	6.0	5.9	4.4	2.9	3.6	4.3	5.0
International Economic	1.0	.5	1.5	1.1	1.6	.7	2.1	1.9	1.9
Miscellaneous "Bad News"	15.8	14.3	14.9	13.4	13.5	12.0	15.1	13.2	18.8
Sports and Human Interest	5.2	3.4	5.7	3.7	3.1	5.8	7.1	7.0	9.8
n=	387	385	335	270	319	275	478	486	479
Between-network rank-order correlations[a]:									
(ABC-CBS) (CBS-NBC)		.98	.94		.91	.84		.97	.96
(ABC-NBC)			.94			.78			.98

(continued)

Table One (continued)

Topic:	1979 ABC %	1979 CBS %	1979 NBC %	1980 ABC %	1980 CBS %	1980 NBC %	1981 ABC %	1981 CBS %	1981 NBC %
Internal Politics	23.7	27.0	23.7	22.9	22.5	26.7	15.3	23.3	26.4
Internal Conflict	3.1	6.1	4.4	2.1	2.9	3.2	8.7	5.6	4.9
Internal Economic	25.1	22.3	16.9	24.3	22.9	22.7	19.7	18.1	18.5
Social Policies	3.1	2.9	7.6	1.8	2.1	2.0	4.0	8.1	3.7
Science, Technology, Art	3.8	5.0	5.6	3.9	7.5	4.0	7.0	6.7	5.3
International Relations	9.3	11.9	10.4	6.0	7.9	5.2	18.0	13.0	17.7
International Conflict	9.6	7.2	9.2	13.4	11.8	11.2	6.0	8.9	9.4
International Economic	5.5	2.5	3.6	6.0	1.4	2.8	5.7	2.2	0.0
Miscellaneous "Bad News"	10.7	9.0	10.8	12.3	14.6	15.1	10.7	11.5	8.3
Sports and Human Interest	6.2	6.1	7.6	7.4	6.4	7.2	5.0	2.6	5.7
n=	291	278	249	284	280	251	300	270	265
Between-network rank-order correlations[a]:									
(ABC-CBS) (CBS-NBC)		.84	.91		.84	.94		.76	.88
(ABC-NBC)		.86			.92			.76	

[a] All coefficients are Spearman's rho calculated for agreement between pairs of networks' topic frequency ranks (the most frequent topic was ranked first, etc.). All are significant. Critical values are: .85+, p<.001; .72+, p<.01; and .55+, p<.05. These values are based on a test of significance for rho which uses Student's t, as detailed in Sidney Siegel's Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), p. 212.

NOTE: Column totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table Two

Items from Each Geopolitical Focus,
By Network and By Year

Focus:	1973			1974			1975		
	ABC %	CBS %	NBC %	ABC %	CBS %	NBC %	ABC %	CBS %	NBC %
Domestic	78.2	78.1	78.4	80.0	81.2	81.0	68.4	64.4	66.3
First World	3.4	4.1	5.3	6.7	6.2	4.0	7.6	8.2	6.5
Second World	.9	1.5	2.9	2.2	3.0	1.6	12.8	13.3	12.9
Third World	17.4	16.3	13.5	11.2	9.7	13.4	11.2	14.2	14.3
n =	321	343	342	464	504	506	304	331	294
x^2 with 6 d.f. (p)=	7.16 (n.s.)			9.06 (n.s.)			2.48 (n.s.)		

	1976			1977			1978		
	ABC %	CBS %	NBC %	ABC %	CBS %	NBC %	ABC %	CBS %	NBC %
Domestic	72.6	71.7	70.7	75.9	81.5	82.5	73.4	73.3	72.4
First World	7.0	6.5	6.9	7.8	7.2	6.2	9.0	7.6	9.0
Second World	4.7	3.1	5.7	4.1	1.6	2.2	3.8	3.1	2.9
Third World	15.8	18.7	16.7	12.2	9.7	9.1	13.8	16.0	15.7
n =	387	385	335	270	319	275	478	486	479
x^2 with 6 d.f. (p)=	3.88 (n.s.)			6.66 (n.s.)			2.24 (n.s.)		

	1979			1980			1981		
	ABC %	CBS %	NBC %	ABC %	CBS %	NBC %	ABC %	CBS %	NBC %
Domestic	62.9	65.1	61.8	59.5	62.1	65.3	69.3	74.8	75.5
First World	12.7	10.4	16.5	11.6	7.9	8.4	11.3	10.0	8.3
Second	6.9	5.4	6.0	8.5	10.0	7.2	10.0	7.0	6.8
Third World	17.5	19.1	15.7	20.4	20.0	19.1	9.3	8.1	9.4
n =	291	278	249	284	280	251	300	270	265
x^2 with 6 d.f. (p)=	5.32 (n.s.)			4.59 (n.s.)			4.80 (n.s.)		

NOTE: Column totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table Three

Between-network Correlations[a] of Topic Frequency Ranks, By Geopolitical Focus and By Year

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Domestic									
ABC/CBS	.95	.71	.95	.95	.98	.98	.94	.96	.74
CBS/NBC	.92	.74	.92	.98	.94	.96	.90	.92	.88
ABC/NBC	.84	.93	.89	.97	.94	.95	.87	.94	.85
First World									
ABC/CBS	.63	.44	.68	.17	.79	.60	.55	.54	.50
CBS/NBC	.55	.64	.63	.88	.66	.61	.62	.61	.56
ABC/NBC	.16	.64	.79	.43	.67	.78	.87	.82	.57
Second World									
ABC/CBS	--	--	.84	.78	--	--	--	.88	.82
CBS/NBC	--	--	.79	.80	--	--	--	.87	.84
ABC/NBC	--	--	.77	.67	--	--	--	.89	.83
Third World									
ABC/CBS	.94	.91	.81	.95	.93	.95	.80	.95	.86
CBS/NBC	.97	.84	.93	.86	.86	.88	.72	.82	.88
ABC/NBC	.99	.83	.77	.95	.91	.96	.68	.87	.82

[a] All coefficients are Spearman's rho calculated for agreement between pairs of networks' topic frequency ranks (the most frequent topic was ranked first, etc.). Underscored coefficients are not significant at the .05 level. Critical values for other coefficients are: .85+, $p<.001$; .72+, $p<.01$; .55+, $p<.05$. These values are based on a test of significance for rho which uses Student's t, as detailed in Sidney Siegel's Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), p. 212.

Where no coefficient is provided, the n of cases was judged to be so small as to render computation of rho unreliable.

Table Four

Length of Items, By Network and By Year

	1973			1974			1975		
Length:	ABC	CBS	NBC	ABC	CBS	NBC	ABC	CBS	NBC
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1-10 sec.	10.6	9.3	16.1	11.2	7.9	15.2	8.6	12.4	8.8
11-20 sec.	24.0	21.6	24.8	26.7	24.2	21.1	21.0	23.0	19.0
21-60 sec.	13.7	21.0	12.0	11.6	18.4	17.2	19.4	20.5	20.1
>60 sec.	51.7	48.1	47.1	50.4	49.4	46.4	60.0	44.1	52.0
n =	321	343	342	464	504	506	304	331	294
X^2 with 6 d.f. (p)=	18.92 (<.01)			23.66 (<.001)			6.56 (n.s.)		

	1976			1977			1978		
	ABC	CBS	NBC	ABC	CBS	NBC	ABC	CBS	NBC
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1-10 sec.	5.4	8.3	9.8	10.7	6.6	10.2	19.4	11.5	12.3
11-20 sec.	26.4	22.6	19.7	21.1	30.4	15.3	17.4	13.4	11.1
21-60 sec.	18.9	22.9	19.1	14.4	16.3	24.4	9.8	20.6	22.3
>60 sec.	49.3	46.2	51.3	53.7	46.7	50.2	53.3	54.5	54.3
n =	387	385	335	270	319	275	478	486	479
X^2 with 6 d.f. (p)=	11.10 (n.s.)			28.59 (<.001)			44.69 (<.001)		

	1979			1980			1981		
	ABC	CBS	NBC	ABC	CBS	NBC	ABC	CBS	NBC
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1-10 sec.	22.3	15.5	14.9	23.9	11.8	14.7	22.0	12.2	15.1
11-20 sec.	20.3	18.3	12.8	16.2	22.5	19.5	16.3	14.8	14.3
21-60 sec.	14.4	17.3	15.3	15.8	19.3	7.6	13.0	20.0	9.1
>60 sec.	42.9	48.9	57.0	44.0	46.4	58.2	48.7	53.0	61.5
n =	291	278	249	284	280	251	300	270	265
X^2 with 6 d.f. (p)=	16.11 (<.02)			35.4 (<.001)			25.29 (<.001)		

NOTE: Column totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table Five
Between-network Correlations[a] of Topic Frequency Ranks
for Items of Greater-than-median Length (in Seconds),
By Year

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Networks:									
ABC/CBS	.92	.96	.93	.84	.89	.93	.87	.99	.68
CBS/NBC	.91	.95	.85	.75	.97	.74	.58	.88	.80
ABC/NBC	.90	.95	.80	.78	.87	.89	.87	.89	.75

[a] All coefficients are Spearman's rho calculated for agreement between pairs of networks' topic frequency ranks (the most frequent topic was ranked first, etc.). All coefficients are significant beyond the .05 level. Critical values of rho are: .85+, $p<.001$; 0.72+, $p<.01$; and .55+, $p<.05$. These values are based on a test of significance for rho which uses Student's t, as detailed in Sidney Siegel's Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), p. 212.

Table Six

Mean Length (in Seconds) of Items, By Network and By Year

	Annual	ABC	CBS	NBC	F-score[a]	F-prob.
1973	92.21	92.88	95.74	88.05	.59	.55
n =	1006	321	343	342		
1974	81.98	85.61	82.11	78.52	1.06	.35
n =	1474	464	504	506		
1975	83.73	80.20	81.21	90.24	1.57	.21
n =	929	304	331	294		
1976	85.50	81.57	85.19	90.37	1.11	.33
n =	1107	387	385	335		
1977	91.48	94.22	86.68	94.36	.71	.49
n =	864	270	319	275		
1978	96.84	93.10	99.81	97.56	.70	.50
n =	1443	478	486	479		
1979	96.74	89.90	96.87	104.58	1.38	.25
n =	818	291	278	249		
1980	95.35	90.11	93.00	103.90	1.34	.26
n =	815	284	280	251		
1981	94.38	85.63[b]	102.52	96.00	2.49	.08
n =	835	300	270	265		
Overall:	90.46	88.05	90.96	92.42	1.90	.14
n =	9291	3099	3196	2996		

[a] A one way analysis of variance was used to test for within-year differences among networks.

[b] ABC and CBS means were significantly different, by the test for least significant differences.

Mean Length (in Seconds) of Items, By Network and By Year

	Annual	ABC	CBS	NBC	F-score[a]	F-prob.
1973	92.21	92.88	95.74	88.05	.59	.55

Mean Length (in Seconds) of Items, By Network and By Year

	Annual	ABC	CBS	NBC	F-score[a]	F-prob.
1973	92.21	92.88	95.74	88.05	.59	.55

Table Seven
Topic Percentages of Lead Stories,
By Network

Topic:	ABC	CBS	NBC
	%	%	%
Internal Politics	29.2	35.2	31.9
Internal Conflict	5.0	3.3	6.5
Internal Economic	18.3	16.9	16.9
Social Policies	0.0	0.9	0.0
Science, Technology, Art	3.2	2.8	2.8
International Relations	17.8	14.6	17.8
International Conflict	13.2	13.1	12.2
International Economic	1.4	1.4	1.9
Miscellaneous "Bad News"	11.9	11.7	13.1
Sports and Human Interest	0.0	0.0	0.5
n =	219	213	213

Between-network rank-order correlations[a]:

(ABC-CBS) (CBS-NBC) .997 .96

(ABC-NBC) .97

[a] All coefficients are Spearman's rho calculated for agreement between pairs of networks' topic frequency ranks (the most frequent topic was ranked first, etc.). All coefficients are significant beyond the $p<.001$ level. The test of significance for rho, using Student's t, is detailed in Sidney Siegel's Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), p. 212.

NOTE: Column totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.